

RESOLUTION OF SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF HAITI

Between August 15 and September 7, 2008, the Caribbean was severely hit by four successive hurricanes (Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike) that devastated several regions with disastrous consequences in particular for the peoples of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. We express our fraternal solidarity with these peoples, and we call on the entire world community to respond with concrete support in accordance with the level of need.

In Haiti, even before the balance is completed, it is known that some 500 people lost their lives. The number of victims reaches 800,000. Every region of the country was severely affected with the destruction of much strategic infrastructure (bridges, roadways, industrial installations, etc) and the loss of a high percentage of food production. Communication with entire departments has been cut off. The two most affected cities are Gonaïves and Cabaret. Gonaïves, the country's third largest city with a population of some 300,000 inhabitants and which in 2004 suffered terrible floodings that caused the death of more than 3,000 people, is now still 85% submerged below water. In Cabaret more than 80 persons have died, most of them sleeping children and babies. More than 80,000 persons have sought refuge in provisional centers and over the past 10 days, 10 refugees died of hunger at those centers.

The application of neoliberal policies since the end of the '80s has dramatically reduced the capacity of the State to administer a territory that faces a generalized environmental, social, and economic crisis, including the rapid disappearance of forest cover, the installation of free-zones in fertile agricultural lands, the destruction of food security with an increase in dependency on the importation of agricultural goods from the United States (Haiti is now the world's third largest importer of rice from the United States.). These circumstances, the result of policies imposed by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), have increased the vulnerability of the country, including in particular its most impoverished sectors, as well as the accumulation of illegitimate debt.

The presence in Haiti of a UN peace and stabilization mission (MINUSTAH) since June, 2004, has contributed to a worsening of the situation through the weakening of national institutions. When the catastrophic floods hit the city of Gonaïves in September, 2004, less than 40% of the emergency assistance requested ever arrived; today the tragedy is repeated without any preventive works having been undertaken to protect the population of Gonaïves. The MINUSTAH costs nearly US\$ 600 million annually. That is an enormous amount of resources for a country where the per capita annual income is US\$ 450 and whose total annual exports are around US\$ 500 million; resources that are not being invested for the reconstruction of the country and its institutions. In addition, the Haitian people, the true creditors, face the risk of being charged for the expenses of the MINUSTAH, an amount that would be added to the already illegitimate debt claimed of the country.

The IFIs and lender countries continue to collect from Haiti payments on debt claims that are estimated at more than US\$ 1.6 billion; a debt that has increased scandalously some 40 times through the complacency of the governments which have held power over the past 34 years. It is important to underscore that the external public debt of Haiti grew from US\$ 40 million in 1970 to US\$ 844 million in 1986, to US\$ 1.3 billion in 2005, and today it is over US\$1.6 billion, even though the majority of Haitian governments never stopped paying faithfully.

It is paradoxical to observe that the debt stock continues to increase rapidly despite the so-called debt relief initiatives launched since 2006 and the restructuring decided by the Paris Club in December 2006. In March, 2006, the IMF and the World Bank integrated Haiti into the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC); the same year the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), at its annual Assembly of the Board of Governors, promised to cancel all outstanding claims against the five most impoverished

countries of the continent (Haiti, Nicaragua, Guyana, Bolivia, Honduras). It should be noted that this cancellation was subject to the fulfillment of the conditionalities defined by the World Bank and the IMF. In practice, it is increasingly evident that these initiatives do not lead to a resolution of the problem of the country's indebtedness and that nothing substantial has changed. In order to illustrate the cynicism of these policies in the case of Haiti, it must be remembered that 4 months after the flooding and destruction of Gonaïves in September, 2004, Haiti was compelled to pay the World Bank US\$ 52.6 million in arrears, a payment which impeded urgent investments and led to a further deterioration in the population's precarious quality of life.

In the face of the present catastrophe, the government of Haiti made an initial announcement offering US\$ 900,000 to assist the victims; at the same time it continues to effectively pay **debt service amounting to approximately US\$ 6,000,000 monthly**. This situation should not and cannot continue.

For all of the above, we, the undersigned participants in the I South-North Study and Strategy Meeting of the International Campaign on Illegitimate Debt, representing 50 global and regional networks and organizations from 36 countries around the world, gathered in Quito, Ecuador between September 9 –15, 2008, reiterate our solidarity with the people of Haiti and call on all the respective lenders and credit agencies to immediately and unconditionally cancel the external debt unjustly claimed of Haiti. We also stand with and support the social forces of Haiti in their demand that the Haitian government repudiate and immediately cease payment of debt service claims until a comprehensive and participatory audit is made of the country's public debt, and we demand that restitution and reparations be made for all that has been unjustly paid so as to guarantee social, economic, and ecological justice. It is time to settle the enormous debt owed to the people of Haiti.

Quito, Ecuador, September 15, 2008

Signed,

Jubilee South, Africa Jubilee South, Jubilee South/Americas, Jubilee South Asia-Pacific Movement on Debt and Development, European Network on Debt and Development EURODAD, Jubilee USA Network, CADTM Belgium, CADTM Ecuador, African Network on Debt and Development AFRODAD, Lutheran World Federation Program on Illegitimate Debt, LATINDADD, Southern Peoples' Ecological Debt Creditors Alliance, Norwegian Church Aid, SLUG- Norway, Debt and Development Coalition of Ireland, Observatory on Debt in Globalization of the Spanish State, French Platform on Debt and Development, Aktion Finantzplatz -Switzerland, Jubilee Debt Campaign-Great Britain, Jubilee Scotland, Jubilee Australia, ATTAC Japan, Freedom from Debt Coalition Philippines, Equity Justice Working Group Bangladesh, Indian Social Action Forum, INFID Indonesia, KAU Indonesia, National Debt Group-Ecuador, Jubilee Peru Network, Jubilee South Brazil, PAPDA Haiti, Dialogue 2000 Argentina, Jubilee South Colombia, "In Debt with Rights" Campaign-Colombia, CADTM Colombia, Red Sinti Techan-El Salvador, Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights Platform-Uruguay, ANEEJ Nigeria, Jubilee Zambia, Economic Justice Network Malawi, Campaign Against Debt-Mali, National Forum on Debt and Development-Ivory Coast, CADTM Morocco, Southern Africa Economic Justice Network

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